

NEWS RELEASE



***OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA
San Diego, California***

***United States Attorney
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For Immediate Release

NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY - January 4, 2008

United States Attorney Karen P. Hewitt announced today that a federal jury returned guilty verdicts as to seven defendants who were charged with participating in a Racketeering Influenced Corrupt Organization (RICO) conspiracy involving the Mexican Mafia, aka “La Eme,” prison/street gang. During the trial, which began on October 15, 2007 and lasted more than two months, the Government presented evidence of numerous racketeering acts committed by the defendants, including: murder, conspiracy to commit murder, conspiracy to distribute controlled substances, distribution of controlled substances, conspiracy to interfere with commerce through threats of violence, and conspiracy to launder drug proceeds.

According to Assistant United States Attorney Todd Robinson, one of the prosecutors on the case, the RICO conspiracy charge of which the defendants were convicted stemmed from a long-term investigation conducted by the multi-agency San Diego Violent Crimes Task Force-Gang Group and North County Regional Gang Task Force, which targeted the criminal activities of Hispanic street gangs with ties to the Mexican Mafia, or “La Eme.”

On September 19, 2007, prior to the commencement of trial, defendants Raul Leon and Salvador Perez entered guilty pleas in federal court in San Diego before United States District Judge Dana M. Sabraw to participating in a Racketeering Influenced Corrupt Organization (RICO) conspiracy involving the Mexican Mafia. In their guilty pleas, defendants Leon and Perez admitted that the Mexican Mafia racketeering organization was involved in a wide range of criminal activities, including: murder, attempted murder, conspiracy to import and distribute controlled substances, conspiracy to interfere with commerce through threats of violence, conspiracy to launder drug proceeds, and robbery. The defendants also acknowledged the manner in which the Mexican Mafia has been able to exert control over illegal activities both within the prison system and on the streets of Southern California through its connection to various Hispanic street gangs in San Diego.

United States Attorney Karen Hewitt said, “The Mexican Mafia is a criminal organization that has operated for years in Southern California and has been a poison to our community. The members and associates of the Mexican Mafia have committed countless crimes of violence and engaged in widespread illegal drug activities. This case was a first for the United States Attorney’s Office in San Diego, because we used the federal RICO conspiracy statute to attack nine members of the upper echelon of the Mexican Mafia. After a trial of more than two months, the jury returned guilty verdicts and these nine defendants now each face a possible life sentence in federal prison for their criminal conduct.”

United States Attorney Karen Hewitt stated that this prosecution would not have occurred without the outstanding work by all members of the Violent Crimes Task Force Gang Group led by the FBI San Diego Field Office.

DEFENDANTS

Case Number: 06cr1243-DMS

Raul Leon

Ricardo Martinez

Eduardo Gonzalez-Gallegos

George Fernandez

Thomas Durkin

Salvador Perez

Richard Valenzuela

Cesar Abarca

Joshua Cruz

SUMMARY OF CHARGE

United States v. Raul Leon, et. al. (Case Number 96CR1243-DMS)

Title 18, United States Code, Section 1962(d) - Conspiracy to Conduct Enterprise Affairs
Through a Pattern of Racketeering Activity

Maximum penalties: life in prison
\$4,000,000 fine
5 years of supervised release

INVESTIGATING AGENCIES

Federal Bureau of Investigation
San Diego Police Department
San Diego Sheriff's Office
North County Regional Gang Task Force
Immigration and Customs Enforcement
Carlsbad Police Department
Escondido Police Department
U.S. Bureau of Prisons
California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation
Naval Criminal Investigative Service
Oceanside Police Department
Drug Enforcement Administration - Los Angeles and Riverside
Bureau of Narcotics Enforcement - Los Angeles and Riverside
U.S. Marshals Service
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives